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Vol. XXXVIII. No. 910.

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APPROACH TO RELIGION

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NEW YORK, N. Y.

THE CATHOLIC MIND, November 22, 1940. Volume XXXVIII, No. 910. Published semi-monthly by The America Press, 53 Park Place, New York. Subscription postpaid. Domestic, 10 cents; yearly, \$2.00; Canada & foreign, \$2.50. Entered as second-class matter, October 22, 1914, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at special rates of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on June 29, 1918. Trade-mark "Catholic Mind," Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

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THE CATHOLIC MIND

VOL. XXXVIII NOVEMBER 22, 1940 No. 910

A Scientific Approach to Religion

JOHN S. O'CONOR, S.J.

Reprinted from The Scientific Monthly.

A STRANGE trend has emerged in recent years among certain writers on scientific subjects, a trend which is directly away from the goal toward which these writers profess to be aiming. Despite the fact that in general our concepts of natural phenomena are becoming more well defined and our knowledge of the world in which we live is growing continuously more extensive, as well as more definite, nevertheless in semi-popular books on scientific subjects, as well as in the more reputable journals, remarks dealing with any aspect of religion have for the most part been characterized by a lack of clear thinking and a vagueness which would lead one to conclude that the authors had chosen the reciprocal of the h of quantum mechanics as the limit of their indeterminacy rather than that minute magnitude itself.

In view of such articles as the recent one by Dr. K. T. Compton on *Religion in a Scientific Era*, as well as a previous one by the late W. M. Davis on *The Faith of Reverent Science*, both of which appeared in the

Scientific Monthly (January, 1940, and May, 1934), it seems appropriate to ask the question: Why do men of science refuse to approach the subject of religion from a scientific viewpoint?

Are they *assuming* without reason that faith and science are irreconcilable so that any attempt at reconciliation is doomed to failure from the start? Do they *postulate* without further examination that dogmatic religion is necessarily and essentially incompatible with the scientific method? Do they *deny a priori* that authority is a source of true knowledge and must be abandoned *in principle*? If they do then they are no longer acting in the role of scientists but are subscribing to propositions the truth or falsity of which they show no evidence of having investigated.

The purpose of this article is to indicate not only that the scientific method of approach to religion is possible but as a matter of fact can be carried through to very definite and, perhaps to some, illuminating conclusions.

In order to avoid points of controversy inevitably connected with sectarianism this discussion will be conducted along only very general lines, will be kept for the most part in the hypothetical mode, and the treatment will emphasize the form and method of approach rather than the matter or content of the various religious questions involved.

We should begin, of course, by defining religion in a manner acceptable to all participants in the discussion. However, even the etymological or nominal definition of religion is open to two interpretations, one which is based on the notion of a bond (from the Latin *religare*, to bind) and another which stems from the Latin derivative *relegere* or *religere*, to treat carefully, to ponder or meditate.

To get a least common denominator for all religions is a task beyond the scope of this consideration, yet an unbiased study of the history of religions and of com-

parative religion sustains a position which maintains that, despite the presence of admixtures such as ancestor worship and accretions of magic and witchcraft, the notion of a supernatural or supreme being is contained at least implicitly in practically all religions. So that on the first interpretation of the nominal definition of religion the idea of God is introduced historically as the term of the bond between man and a higher being, while on the second interpretation this supreme being appears, on the same historical basis, as the object of man's meditations.

The position taken here is one which is entirely unassailable on anthropological grounds. It starts with a *proof* of the existence of God as the First and Unproduced Cause of the universe. His supreme dominion by reason of this creation and conservation follows logically. It is the recognition by man, through his intellect, of this supreme dominion and the regulation of his life, through the power of his free will, in conformity with the manifest will of God that constitutes the true essence of religion.

To establish this position let me offer some hypothetical propositions, proposing them as the mathematicians propose their postulate systems, and then examine their consistency. If the existence of an intelligent being as the First Cause of the universe can be established by *rational scientific inference* from observed facts, if no other rational explanation of the produced intelligent beings existing in the world today has even been found, then is not the only truly scientific position the one which accepts the existence of such a First Cause which we call God? The objection that such reasoning is based on unjustifiable extrapolation from the seen to the unseen is certainly not valid. Those who maintain it are driven back into a positivism which would throw out most of the conclusions of modern physics. How much of what we call scientific knowledge is based on observations of

the senses *alone*? As has been said so often we have never seen and never will see a free electron. We do, however, see its *effects* in cloud chamber and on the recorder of a tube counter, and from the sensible evidence we *infer* (by the principle of sufficient reason) the existence of a cause of the track or pulse, which we name the electron. The knowledge of the existence of a First Cause is reached in the same manner, using the data derived from the senses and reasoning by the same laws of logic without which no scientific conclusion whatsoever could be reached.

In such an article as this there is not space for a detailed delineation of the cosmological argument for the existence of God, but I am absolutely convinced that anyone who would give the same consideration to that proof, as outlined for example in William Brosnan's *God and Reason*, as he would give to a line of argumentation found in the *Physical Review* or the *Proceedings of the Royal Society* would be forced to admit that the cogency of this argument for the existence of God far outstrips that which is found in the reasoning which Chadwick uses to prove the existence of the neutron, which today is accepted as certain as any conclusion in the physical sciences.

Now for a second hypothesis: Granted the existence of an intelligent First Cause does it not follow that such a being must possess knowledge, and as the First Cause of all intelligent beings capable of intercommunication, He must also have the power of communicating His knowledge to other individuals? Is there any conceivable reason why such a being could not be the legitimate source of new knowledge for mankind? Any reason offered for the rejection of such testimony would also exclude all human testimony, and make a continuation of the recent rapid advances in science practically impossible. If we accepted in science only those conclusions which we have drawn from facts which we ourselves have ob-

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served how far would we get in any investigation? All mathematical, chemical and physical tables could be thrown away since on such a basis we would have to refuse to accept the values contained therein merely on the word of those who have determined them. Every time we wished to perform an experiment involving some additional constant we would have personally to determine its value.

On the contrary we are, as a matter of fact, accepting on faith many hundreds of items in both our daily routine as well as in our original researches. We are permitting authority to become a legitimate source of useful information for us.

It is futile to say that if we so wished we could verify all conclusions we so accept. The fact is that we do not do so, and in many cases could not, even if we wanted to do so. To take but one example, could we set the universe in reverse and reobserve the path of the light rays in the sun's gravitational field during the eclipses of 1919 and 1922? While it is true that the art of photography has given an objectivity to much physical data not enjoyed in the earlier days of science, even here we must accept the authority of the photographer inasmuch as we admit his requisite knowledge and mastery of the technique as well as his honesty in not retouching the film.

The conclusion is inescapable. If we admit the existence of a personal God we must also admit the possibility of revelation by Him to mankind. This admission is not to be made on the basis of some blind impulse which we dare not attempt to explain, but on the basis of judgments similar to those which we make about every-day matters—scientific and otherwise. Assent to the possibility of revelation is therefore reasonable and rational, and such is the *de jure* statement of the case.

As to the *de facto* situation; here again we have a problem which most scientists refuse to face in a

scientific manner. Does God exist? Has He revealed Himself to us in any more direct manner than by His manifestations in nature? The students of Catholic *scientific* theology are convinced that the answers to these questions must be given in the affirmative, and they base their position on what they consider incontrovertible physical evidence—evidence that has been for a period not far short of 2,000 years, and still is acceptable to a large group of scholars.

Instead of investigating this evidence all but a few scientists are content with dismissing the entire problem by quoting the mistakes of a few misguided individuals, and they then refuse to pursue the matter further.

If all the articles on science were taken up with such topics as the mistaken notion of Newton concerning the corpuscular nature of light or the persistent refusal of Lord Kelvin to accept, in the face of convincing evidence, Rutherford's theory of radioactive disintegration, the literature of physics would indeed be in a sorry state. And while such a situation does not exist regarding the topics which are the proper subject-matter for most scientific discussion, yet when questions of religion arise the attitude seems to change so as to preclude concentration on all but a few extreme and today scientifically untenable religious positions.

Because the electronic charge has been found to have a value different, by an amount greater than the admitted limits of experimental error, from the universally accepted value of 4.770×10^{-10} abs. e.s.u. we do not therefore completely discard the concept of the electron. Neither should we consider all religion "outmoded" because of the fanatical theological interpretation of a particular bizarre sect. Individual mistakes in arithmetic do not destroy the foundations of mathematics. Nor do the personal errors of whole schools of thought make all reasoning processes invalid. It

is human to err as the ghosts of phlogiston and elastic solid ether theory can testify, but because of such errors science has not concluded that the continuation of the search for truth is futile.

Let me therefore present a further question which should again be answered from a scientific viewpoint: Granted the existence of God and the possibility of revelation and given the fact that certain groups of propositions are claimed by their defenders to be revealed truths, are not these claims entitled to the same attention and examination as is accorded to any other scientifically acceptable hypothesis?

The establishment of the tenets of true Christianity regarding revealed truths begins with a consideration of the authenticity and genuineness of scriptural writings as well as the historicity of the events recounted therein. From the valid testimony of these writings considered as historical documents we conclude legitimately not only to the existence of the person of Jesus Christ and the doctrines which He taught but also to the occurrence of certain special manifestations connected with His life and death. These special manifestations called miracles (such as resurrection from the dead) never have and never will receive an adequate *natural* explanation. They constitute mighty motives of credibility and irrefragable external proof that what is claimed to be Divine revelation is actually so. Nor can they be dismissed merely by the use of depreciatory adjectives, as has been done by the late W. M. Davis referred to above. No truly scientific refutation of the existence of miracles has ever been written because it would require a proof either of the non-existence of God or else put the author in one of two extremely uncomfortable and unscientific positions of having to either deny all and any form of physical law or, admitting such, he would then have to prove that any change in the admitted law would be forever impossible.

Let me turn now from argument to illustration and propose an analogy which should add strength to the appeal for a scientific approach to religion. The scientific method is one which accepts facts and attempts to fit them into a theory or system. Agreement between fact and theory may establish or confirm the latter, but in all cases it at least renders the theory under test acceptable for further consideration. The facts of history pertaining to the teachings of Christ constitute a body of data. These have been molded (under the guidance of Christ Himself) into a system, in such a way as to constitute an organism which displays the proper functioning of the relations between theory and fact. Not only does this organization give a satisfactory interpretation of the facts on the basis of the theory which it represents, but this synthesis has been for 1,900 years and still is a workable system for millions of individuals the world over. So that to the pragmatic question, uppermost in the minds of so many today, revealed religion also gives a positive and favorable answer.

A further question must still be proposed: Does the system of revealed religion under consideration contravene any of the known facts of science?

The answer to this question will be given in the form of a challenge which may be stated as follows: No doctrine or dogma essential to Christian revelation and defined as such by either a general council of the Church of Rome or by any *ex cathedra* declaration of any pontiff of that same Church has ever been found in contradiction to the certainly known facts of science.

We are of course assuming that the "conscientious objector" to the above proposition will investigate the meaning of Papal infallibility and *ex cathedra* definition before dragging out the already threadbare instance of the condemnation of Galileo.

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Let us now turn to some of the views of Dr. Compton as expressed in the article referred to previously. In his summary Dr. Compton says, "Its (science's) whole tendency is to emphasize the fundamentally spiritual character of religion as representing the highest ideals of mankind as *opposed to theological rules, doctrines, theories, etc.*" (Italics mine.) Elsewhere in the article Dr. Compton speaks of "the dynamic character" of religion and "the need of a variety of religious denominations which emphasize different aspects of . . . the spiritual life." Regarding the changes in and diversity of religions, a distinction is necessary which may take its point of departure from the words of Dr. Millikan quoted in the same article. "I believe," says Millikan, "that essential and not dogmatic religion is one of the world's supremest needs." In this quotation a complete but gratuitous opposition is set up between a religion and its dogmas; the implication is that dogma is not essential to religion. But it is merely implication and not proof. If a religion holds nothing certain, nothing true, what is it worth as a religion—is it worthy of the name? It is of course true that religion, culture and knowledge itself may differ accidentally in different countries and in different periods of development, but it is obviously impossible for the same religion to teach essentially different doctrines at different times as it is absurd to claim that two religions which are in such essential opposition can both be true.

When we use a coordinate system to solve a problem, the important physical quantities in the problem are independent of our choice of a reference system. They are what are called invariants. The essential doctrines so frequently referred to with contempt as "dogmas" are the invariants of true religion. They remain the same throughout all transformations in space and time. Without them the adequate solution of the problem of the universe will never be obtained.

Social Welfare Today

REV. BRYAN J. MCENTEGART

*Presidential address at opening of Forty-first Annual Meeting
of the New York State Conference on Social Work,
Hotel Pennsylvania, October 8, 1940.*

AMERICA has had to face many critical hours in its history. The generations which have come and gone since the Founding Fathers brought into being this Republic, have labored, struggled and shed their blood to establish, defend and preserve the precious liberties of a certain way of life. From every crisis during this long struggle, America has emerged triumphant. But at this hour, the principles of our American democracy are being challenged as never before in our history. This Conference is meeting at such a time.

We need not review here the catastrophic events which are changing the face of Europe and destroying the spirit of its unfortunate people. Our hearts go out to them as fellow human beings, for we see them stripped, nation by nation, people by people, of their liberties. The second World War in our time represents a death struggle for democracy. Therefore, as a nation, America must be alive to the dangers which threaten the democratic way of life. Our first concern is so to strengthen ourselves as to avert this calamity.

The theme, then, of this Conference, as I see it, is social welfare in relation to national defense. We are here to answer the question: What can social work do to bolster the defenses of democratic America?

In the very first article of the Constitution of this nation, our forefathers wisely linked the promotion of the general welfare with provision for the common

defense. They knew that the strength of this nation would be no greater than the degree to which the well-being and security of its citizens were insured. Social work in its concern for the well-being of the people, may, therefore, be a determinative factor in the promotion of national defense.

Just as total war is a conflict not solely between competing armies, ships and planes, but rather between whole nations, so too total defense involves the training of soldiers, the procurement of machines, and the spirit and strength of the whole population. To preserve democracy we must preserve the basic civil and political liberties which we rightly treasure. And at the same time we must make sure that the basic necessities for truly democratic living continue to be available to all our people. Effective democracy aims at decent living conditions for all its people. The achievement of this aim constitutes the strongest defense we have. Social welfare is essentially a part of national defense. It is not apart from it.

In the deliberations of this Conference, we will not be circumscribed by the boundaries of our own State. We will see it as a major cell in the entire organism of the nation. We must realize that whatever is said or done here, will radiate far beyond the borders of this, our State. Traditionally, New York State has stood in the foreground in shaping the thought and life of this nation. On the other hand conditions throughout the nation have had and will continue to have an important bearing on the social welfare of New York.

"Social Welfare Today" is a broad topic, much broader than the customary field of social work. It embraces an adequate standard of living, sound programs of health, of housing, of education, care of the aged and the homeless, constructive opportunities for youth, and true spiritual and moral growth within the family. In covering so wide an area this evening,

it is inevitable that we will pass over ground already familiar to many of us and that details will give way to general statements concerning the many factors contributing to national well-being and national defense. But the effort will be well worth while if it stamps in our memory a fairly complete picture of the ramparts we watch.

Social work ministering to the poor, the sick, the disheartened and the wayward has served the nation well. It is our mission to see to it that social work shall continue to serve our nation in building a strong and permanent defense by promoting the general welfare.

The White House Conference of 1940 saw fit to designate the family as the "threshold of democracy." The strength of a nation is measured by the strength of its family life. Society's first duty is to the family. Social work, if it is to help build the nation's defenses, must begin at the source of national life—the family. Our efforts must center largely upon one objective—to preserve or to restore the integrity of home life.

The future of a nation depends also upon its youth. Social work must, therefore, exercise a concern for youth that it in turn, imbued with democratic ideals, may freely dedicate itself to the defense and welfare of the nation. Of these two bases, sound family life and proper training of youth, repose the strength of America. Our defense must come from within if we are to remain a democracy.

With this premise, we may safely review the gains in social welfare which have been achieved during the recent depression years and then chart our future needs. The many elements in our social and economic life are like the spokes of a vast wheel radiating from a hub, which is the family. We tend, in our work, to isolate the different programs of health and welfare and to place them into separate categories. It is, however, essential to see these in a total picture as forces

at once radiating from, and converging upon, the family.

The welfare of a democracy predicated upon the welfare of the family is, to a great degree, dependent upon the earning capacity of its wage earners. Work must be provided at fair wages if we are to have freedom and social well-being. We may estimate that during the past ten years probably one-third of our population has been dependent, at one time or another, upon public or private aid for the necessities of life. Strengthening of our democratic society demands work and a decent standard of living for every family.

In this era of technological expansion, social welfare demands that we adjust the balance between high-scale production and our standard of living. It is our duty to protect labor in every just way, fostering effective organization, strengthening fair wage and hour laws, insuring wider coverage of social insurance, protecting the right of collective bargaining and developing agencies for placement and retraining of labor. There is need to create new jobs for the millions still unemployed. During the fiscal year ending this June, employment was provided for approximately two million persons in this country through the WPA. But this was only a fraction of the nine million who were without jobs.

In our own State, great efforts have been made to maintain or restore the integrity of the families of the unemployed. During the past year, Home Relief expenditures averaged ten and one-half million dollars a month for the care of 300,000 cases. An additional four and one-half millions a month were given to 36,000 families receiving Aid to Dependent Children and 112,000 persons receiving Old Age assistance. Programs of public works were also carried on with reduced WPA quotas. Steps have been taken to improve our system of unemployment insurance, and sincere efforts made to harmonize relations between

labor and management. The basic concept behind these programs is that home life must be preserved and the family kept intact.

In all such efforts, social and human values have to be preeminent. Employment is supremely important, but it must be provided with due regard for the dignity of labor and with fair relations maintained between employer and employee. Labor must be assured of its rightful place with management in the promotion of industrial efficiency. We must seek to insure a currently proper balance between labor, industry and agriculture. Similarly, in the programs of public assistance and private welfare agencies, we must hold up self-respect and self-help as the ideal of family life.

Under the present pressure of defense needs, we are witnessing a great acceleration in the production of armaments. To a necessary extent, our national economy is being militarized. Factories and farms and vast industrial organizations of the nation, are mobilized for national defense. Our man power has been conscripted, our national wealth has been drawn on for unprecedented peace-time expenditures for defense. It is estimated that armament costs may amount to the stupendous sum of thirteen billion dollars of which nearly five billion will be spent before next July.

The placing of the nation upon a war economy is bound to have a profound influence on social and economic patterns. More than ever before, it will be necessary to insist that the social gains made in recent years shall not be lost. Rearmament must not submerge human rights.

Other elements in our social and economic life play a vital part in relation to the welfare of the family unit. With these we are equally concerned.

Good health for all the people is a prime requisite of national preparedness in its broadest sense. We

have advanced public health, industrial hygiene, maternal and child care. Great strides have been made in reducing infant mortality and the maternity death rate. Child welfare services provided through the Social Security Act have met, to some extent, the needs of rural children. Plans are now being made for great expansion in health services for youth. All this emphasis on the importance of health has at last culminated in the projected national health program.

Yet, as the White House Conference indicates, a large section of the population is still living and dying without the benefits of modern medical science. It is imperative in terms of national well-being that social work take the lead in pointing the need for more hospital and health centers, for better health protection in both rural and urban areas. We must be concerned with making more widely available preventive and curative health services and medical care, adequate hospitalization for low income families, health education for children and families and a more equitable sharing of the responsibility for the public health on the part of all agencies in the community in conjunction with the government. In all this, social work can contribute much through the training of qualified personnel and through research in accordance with sound principles and based upon broad experience.

The preservation of family life also involves a deep concern for adequate housing. Housing has become a major concern of our government. Federal sponsorship has brought an encouraging response from the States. Housing acts have been passed in all but ten States. Yet, although the past ten years have been epochal in the history of housing, there remains urgent need to continue and expand this program, particularly in the rural areas, where half of the nation's children live.

We cannot have healthy children in our cities, if

we permit them to be reared in homes unfit for habitation. A large-scale movement has been launched to replace such dwellings with housing projects within the means of low income families. Because of underbuilding during the depression years, there is, at present, an accumulated shortage of more than one and one-half million dwellings in cities and villages, in addition to about two and one-half million worn-out houses in need of replacement. Some three million farm dwellings fail to meet minimum health and comfort standards. At least one-third of our housing is bad enough to be a health hazard. Public housing is a long-range public health measure. Here is an area in which social work has a great responsibility in relation to the national defense.

No nation can endure when economic success becomes its supreme aim. The sinews of family life need to be strengthened with the substance of moral and spiritual values. The social worker cannot with good conscience fail to emphasize the sacred nature of the family, to strengthen the bonds of true domestic unity—the authority vested in the parents, their mutual rights and duties and the qualities of love, reverence, mutual assistance, self-respect and self-support which should characterize the true home. These are the spiritual and moral elements from which the nation derives its greatest strength. These are of the essence of total national defense.

This is what we mean by the sacred sanctuary of family life. It is here in the wholesome atmosphere of the home that the child or youth learns respect and obedience to authority, parental reverence and respect for self and others. It is here that he grasps the concept of democratic living through shared and cooperative effort. In the home he should learn his worth as an individual and become aware of his function in the society of his human fellows. The home is the germ and seed of democracy in the nation.

Recognition is due to the importance of religion as a factor in the democratic way of life and in the development of personal and social integrity. For religion is at the very heart of democracy and the family. It should be the concern of social work to emphasize the eternal values and the ethical principles which underlie true family life. Approximately half of the children and youth of this land receive no religious instruction outside of the home. In the face of this appalling fact, it is our solemn obligation to bring the salutary power of religious and moral principles into the homes of this land.

We are in a period of rapid and tragic change. No one dare predict the future. All watch the horizon with apprehension. Our nation is vital to all of us. Our future rests with our youth. Our national strength will rest upon the training of our future leaders in democratic ideals.

The ideals of youth cannot be realized unless opportunities are offered. This means provision for education, health, recreation, moral and spiritual growth and a real chance to earn their living. Only thus can we foster individual freedom and social unity. Youth demands security and recognition of its human dignity.

A recent study of youth and its problems states the case in significant terms: Today we have probably four million young men and women out of school—totally unemployed. Millions of others have part-time jobs, or are in schools. It is our duty to create conditions in which their individual freedom can be assured. This will require close and sympathetic cooperation between the schools, industry and organized labor.

We have made some progress in meeting the economic needs of our youth. Large numbers have found employment through various types of public programs, the Junior Placement Service, the NYA and the CCC camps. But there still remains the necessity

for more opportunities for work and training. Increased facilities for counseling, training and placement are imperative. This is vital to youth and vital to the nation in its present situation.

Youth must feel that the democratic way is the best way; that America is greater than her faults. The hope and faith of young people are in danger because our very freedom to discuss defects has led some to concentrate on these defects and to ignore what is far more important, our liberty to act as men—to meet, to speak, to write and to worship at we will. That liberty is built on faith that man has a Divine spark in him. He was not meant by his Maker to be herded or enslaved. Free men should govern themselves. Such has been the cherished faith of our people, young and old. Such it must continue to be.

Sound education is another pressing need of the hour. Sound education is basic and a permanent investment in national preparedness. A most significant recent change in American education was the shift in the number of schools between 1930 and 1936—a decrease of four thousand elementary schools, an increase of nine hundred public high schools and increases of about fifty public and two hundred private institutions of higher education. These changes indicate the shift in the age of the population. They reflect the depression years, when youth was unable to get jobs and so stayed in school.

Our economic system demands higher skills from fewer people, whereas our school system has been giving better cultural training in recent years to more people. The result has been that education has imparted an appreciation of fine cultural patterns, but our economic order has not made it possible for anything like these ideals to be realized. Is it any wonder then that we find disgruntled and frustrated young people?

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school system into balance with the economic structure of the nation. This calls for a critical evaluation of education—its purpose, the type of people who teach, the cultural and practical values of the curriculum. It necessitates a refashioning of our whole educational process. Education should have the twofold aim of teaching youth how to live as well as how to make a living.

In all that I have said, it is implicit that family integrity and opportunity for youth constitute the two bases of the real inner-strength of the nation. We have considered objectively the gains that have been made and have tried to chart future needs in these two great areas. Part of social work's contribution to the national defense will be its sincere efforts to build a better social framework in which the members of the family group may live.

The recommendations of the White House Conference of 1940 outline the social welfare objectives of our people for the next decade. Realizing that these must be adjusted to changing conditions, I should still like to see organized in New York State a body of citizens pledged to study and promote the application of these recommendations in our State, and to work in close relation with the State Commission for National Defense. In this way, we can give practical proof of our conviction which I have stated before, that social welfare is a part of national defense and not apart from it.

To carry on this double program for the internal as well as the external strength of our people will require discipline and sacrifice. If we are to knit together into a nationality the thought, the resources and the energies of our people, we must be prepared to spend ourselves with the same degree of devotion as did the men who built this nation. We must be concerned with how much we can give, rather than with how much we can get. Nations do not collapse from

without but from within. And history teaches that the internal collapse of a people is always preceded by the loss of spiritual and moral ideals.

There are dangers and difficulties ahead — how great, how extensive, no man knows. But the spirit of this country has been and still is, liberty first—security will follow. What can I do?, not What I can get?, still is the question with all God-fearing Americans.

When a free nation mobilizes to preserve peace, to preserve the sanctity of the home, to preserve its cherished heritage of freedom from totalitarian rule, it looks to its youth. This confronts social work with a job inseparable from total defense. Social workers must give more of themselves, not only to preserve our social gains, but to lessen the inescapable hardships attendant upon a new order of life in the nation.

When in successive drafts—60,000 men, 120,000, 400,000 and constantly upwards—our youth are called to prepare for the defense of our country, nothing short of the efforts of a united people will avail to temper the hardships inevitable with the dislocation of economic, home and family life.

Here is a job for us, social workers trained and experienced through the years in ameliorating and softening the blows of everyday life. Where will we be? At our posts, wherever the immediate need presents itself; in the homes of young wives and children, where the necessities of public service and patriotism have created the urgency for guidance, advice and aid; in camps and cantonments, and before administrative boards, always serving the individual and our country.

We are met in this Conference to look the facts squarely in the face and to dedicate ourselves to intelligent and purposeful effort; to contribute our all to the national security.

Social workers are men and women of peace. But

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I have yet to meet one who would consent to submit this nation or its people to a peace of slavery or a peace of death. We stand ready to make any sacrifice needed for the armed defense of our liberties and our democratic institutions. At the same time, we will not relent for a moment in our efforts to remove all conditions within this land which compel any human being to live a sub-human life.

In These, Our Times

MARY SYNON

Commission on American Citizenship, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.

Reprinted from Journal of Religious Instruction.

TODAY on the map of the world stand seven points that have been crossroad markings of Western civilization, points where mankind has turned from one way of life to another, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse, but always changing the course of human history.

There is the Basilica of Saint Peter's in Rome which for sixteen hundred years has seen the high tides and the low of the power on earth of the Church of Christ. There is the Mosque of Santa Sophia in the city that was once Constantinople, that greek Byzantine structure which has been Catholic and Greek Catholic and Moslem and Catholic again, and is once more Moslem. There is the quay of Marseilles, the old port of the Crusaders from which the statue of Notre Dame de la Garde looks over to Africa. There is the Elster Gate of the monastery at Wittenberg where Martin Luther burned the edict of excommunication directed against him. There are the Houses of Parliament at Westminster where the barons of

England gave up the freedom they had won in Magna Charta to follow tamely the selfish lead of a Henry VIII. There is the nave of Notre Dame of Paris, seized and desecrated by the atheist mob of the French Revolution but long since restored to the Church; and there is the Red Square outside the Kremlin in Moscow.

Past these points have surged the great masses of peoples who have sought, sometimes by right means, sometimes by wrong, to find their ways to that realm of justice and charity which is the only land where men may live honestly and honorably on their way back to God. Their passings and repassings have made the history of the western world. Misled, misguided, misdirected at times, they have pressed forward down highways that led them not to freedom but to deeper slavery, only to have to retract their steps wearily and despairingly. Always, however, there glowed in their tired hearts hope that some day, in some way, they or their children would find the right road to justice and happiness.

Now, in these our times, humanity is once again on the march. A great procession of men and women, seeking redress for social and economic wrongs, demanding the justice of true freedom and a true living wage, visioning the establishment of a brave, new world, is moving forward, day and night. The war of Europe is but an emanation of the deeper, wider war that has been, for nearly a century, agitating the minds of western mankind. The war of Europe may be ended by a treaty which may settle, for a brief time, geographical boundaries and political affairs; but the deeper war can be settled in no way but by a real Truce of God. For it is a war that transcends borders and sets man against man rather than nation against nation. It is the ages-long war, sometimes expressed in actual revolution, always present in the consciousness of the oppressed for economic freedom.

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Ever since the fall of feudalism and the rise of capitalism the elements of this struggle have been growing. In the nineteenth century they rose to such height that there developed two great movements consciously directed toward the betterment of the social conditions of the great mass of mankind. In realization of the conditions they sought to combat the movements were one. In method of dealing with those conditions they were as far apart as the poles: for one was the Communism of Karl Marx and the other was the Christian Social Doctrine of Pope Leo XIII.

From the mark of that nineteenth century, a time that saw Bonaparte and Disraeli, Cavour and Gladstone, Jackson and Lincoln, only the German student and the Roman pontiff emerge with the essential quality of permanent greatness, the ability to define and project issues that remain alive long after their deaths. The conditions seen by Marx and Leo XIII have been so little changed that they still challenge all thinking men to find a method to eradicate them. The division of thought today is no longer a division between those who would hold the *status quo* and those who would change it. It is between those who would change it by complete state domination and those who would change it by the restoration of religious, intellectual and moral order. Social disorder, said Marx, was the cause of intellectual and moral disorder. Social disorder, said Leo, was not the cause but the result of intellectual and moral disorder. Root out these by the teaching of religion, and social disorder will die on the stem. Today, nearly fifty years after the greatest of Social Encyclicals, the *Rerum Novarum*, there is no sharper definition than this between the two methods of revising the social scheme of western society. Overthrow all established order and create a new state, say the Marxians, a man-planned, man-organized state without God but in itself a god de-

manding the complete subservience of all its people. Hold to established order, say the Christian Democrats, but within it teach men justice and charity so well that there will be no social injustice of class against class, of man against man.

Even the establishment and development of Fascist and Nazi ideologies has not changed the essential fact that the real conflict of our times is between the Marxian and the Christian plans for social betterment. For Nazis and Fascists have taken over enough Marxian ideas of state control to make them hardly less totalitarian than is Russia; and, even though they do not subscribe to the full theory of Marxian Socialism, they nonetheless glorify the state at the expense of both God and God's creature, the individual. Their existence, therefore, does not change the fact that the basic struggle remains, as it did in Leo's time, between Marxian and Roman Catholic. For, no matter how the war in Europe ends, the question remains: Granted that the social condition of man must be bettered, how shall this betterment be done?

Already the Marxian has given example of the working of his method. The disillusionment of some of the most idealistic, high-minded, forward-looking followers of the Communistic doctrine is the strongest proof of the local failure of the Lenin plan. Against such local failure the Communists put up the argument that the workings of Communism cannot be fairly judged until the whole world has become Communistic; and by old means of force and diplomacy and new means of spreading propaganda they have set out to win the world. One of the key points necessary to their complete success is our United States of America. If, in a war-worn world, they can ally us with their own way of thought, they will have gone far toward conquering both hemispheres.

That danger, however, grave though it may be if

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conditions in the nation should not improve, if unemployment and other economic injustices continue, is less than the more immediate danger of a reaction which would throw reason out of the window and assert that because a method of changing a condition was wrong the condition itself must be right. That, in effect, would be the same as an assertion that a man is not ill because his doctor's treatment has not cured him. The only reasonable course is, therefore, to accept the fact that the social condition of our nation, no less than that of the rest of the western world, is bad and that we, as Catholics, have the remedy if only we have the wisdom and fortitude to apply it.

WHAT IS THAT PRESCRIPTION?

It is none other than the one given by Pope Leo XIII in the *Rerum Novarum*, the establishment of religion and morality as the basis of society. Pope Pius XI, who reinforced the *Rerum Novarum* by his own *Quadragesimo Anno*, in which he worked out a system of occupational democracy designed to overcome the economic inequalities of modern capitalism, saw the intimate relationship of religion and citizenship. He saw, too, the importance of the United States of America as both laboratory in itself and balance wheel in its relation to other nations, and, with amazing foresight, delegated to the American hierarchy the task of formulating "a constructive program of social action, fitted in detail to local needs, which will command the admiration and acceptance of all right-thinking men." The bishops, in response to the Pope's appeal, instructed The Catholic University of America to prepare a program of civic education based on ethical principles, for ethical principles alone, they held, "would make men respect their own rights and the rights of their fellow citizens."

What relation exists between this program for

teaching citizenship in the Catholic schools of the United States and the great, general ideas of revitalizing the social system of our times by the root-feeding of religion and morality?

A very close, very deep and very significant relation. It is possible to make over an adult world, but it is far more surely possible to create the adult world of the next generation by the training of the children of this generation. We Catholics are, it is true, a minority in our nation, but, if we put into effect an educational program which will train the men and women of tomorrow into good citizenship, into consciousness of their obligations to others as well as of their own rights, we shall have the most highly intelligent and forward-looking minority in any country of our time. We shall have an answer to the problems besetting a stricken and troubled and confused world. We shall have purpose in our citizenship, and direction. We shall know where we are going, and why. We shall have gone far enough in knowledge and in wisdom so that some future historian, seeing the work of trained, intelligent, enlightened Catholic citizens in our United States, may one day choose one of our cities as an eighth crossroad point of civilization, and write of it: Here mankind, seeking peace, found and held it by knowledge and use of the Christian principles of morality and religion.

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The Vincentian Spirit

CYRIL T. MCCARTHY

Secretary, Particular Council of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Cincinnati.

Reprinted from The Catholic Charities Review, October, 1940.

DAWN, shedding the shroud of night, filters through the forbidding prison bars to discover the anxious, ashen face of the condemned man. Another dawn—but not another day. For the dawn brings the firing squad.

The haze of twilight steeps a dull prison day into the restful quiet of night, giving promise that the ensuing dawn brings a new freedom, a new life—the dawn of parole. But the thrill of dawn, the joy of a new-born liberty, is chilled by the cold realization that ghosts of the past threaten to benight the promise of happiness so long anticipated.

The man facing the firing squad knows that death and eternity are inevitable; he prepares himself to meet both. To the parolee, life is a peculiar fate. His new liberty is an invisible slavery. Too often his stigma is the stigma of Cain. When he needs a friend most, he is friendless. When he yearns for encouragement and is desperate to make the most of another chance, he finds his lot very discouraging, and his fellowmen actively unsympathetic or passively uninterested.

THE KEEPER OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

The lighthouse is universally accepted as the symbol of encouragement and hope, of direction and guidance, to the distressed. The Society of Saint Vin-

cent de Paul for more than a century has styled itself as a lighthouse to the poor and to the discouraged and oppressed. In these hundred years the members of the Society have found themselves engaged in many and varied types of relief work. Because of its spiritualized viewpoint, the Society should endeavor to specialize in a field of activity that is featured by the saving of souls.

It is difficult to find a more typically Vincentian work than the rehabilitation of paroled prisoners. It is so strikingly like the mission of our holy Patron, Saint Vincent de Paul, that we can almost envisage him smiling his approval on the project.

The keeper of the lighthouse must see to it that the beacon burns constantly, lest the distressed vessels meet with disaster through his negligence. The members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have volunteered for the serious duty of keeping the fire of Faith burning brightly in their own hearts, to direct and encourage their friends, the poor, the sick, the unfortunate, in the way of spiritual life. Surely, no one is more desperately in need of this type of Catholic Action than the parolee. And there is every reason to believe that the Society, appreciating the value of this service, will sponsor the noble and important enterprise.

THE FORGOTTEN MAN

To emphasize the need of this work, and to inspire our brothers with zeal, let us look at the "forgotten man" as he awaits, in the twilight of his cell, the dawn of his parole.

As he gazes, in pensive mood, at the gathering shadows, he thinks how, on the morrow, he will walk forth from his captivity into the wide world of freedom. And as he looks into "green pastures of hope bathed in God's good sunlight," black clouds of doubt begin to make ominously patterned shadows on the landscape of the future.

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How will he be greeted in the old home town? Will he be able to smile confidently against furtive looks of distrust? A loving wife has repeatedly expressed her joy at the thought of having him home again. But has she reckoned with the stigma that marks him and that will shadow her life as well as his? Will a devoted son continue to idolize a father who has worn stripes of shame? How long will it take the insinuations of neighborhood gossips to poison an impressionable mind? Can he hope for the continued friendships of yesterday, or will he be shunned as a moral leper?

There is the question of obtaining work. Will any employer, howsoever humane, take a risk on a "marked man"? What promise can be held forth for a man who must give a penitentiary as reference? If only there were a friend to whom he could go—a friend who would plan a new start for him! But what planning can be done from behind bars?

Whether he realizes it or not, the parolee is the "forgotten man." When, crestfallen and diffident, he walks into a labyrinth of circumstances awaiting him at the prison gates, he faces a veritable vortex of insidious suspicions and questionings and insinuations calculated to break the spirit of a moral Hercules.

It is not improbable that the unabated onslaught of dispiriting propaganda may weaken well-meant resolutions and bring the unfortunate victim back to bondage, a parole violator.

So, like a distressed ship, the "forgotten man" floundering in a fog of doubt and misgivings, anxiously searches the shore for the light of friendship to guide him to self-confidence and reinstatement in a social order that is too often selfishly unsympathetic.

THE LIGHT THAT SHALL NOT FAIL

When we realize that prison chaplains, thoroughly appreciating the unhappy lot of the "forgotten man," are ever pleading the cause of candidates for parole,

when we know that so many of the parolees have voluntarily returned to prison after facing a prejudiced community, we cannot but become interested in a project which looks to the befriending of the "handicapped."

We have but to study the life of Saint Vincent de Paul, so outstanding because of its mission to the "forgotten man," to see that the service of sponsoring parolees is a mission after the heart of our beloved Patron. We are all familiar with his charitable work with the galley slaves, the "forgotten man" of three centuries ago, and we may rest assured that Saint Vincent de Paul would more than endorse this special work of sponsoring paroled convicts. He certainly would not want to see the Society of which he is Patron overlook the opportunity of doing so splendid a work of charity.

The principle on which our Society is built gives special consideration to the charity which is hidden lest the publicity of self-esteem should poison the glory which is the sole right of "our Father Who is in heaven" and Who will repay us for the charity we perform unknown to the world. To sponsor the parole of a prisoner, to counsel him while he is going through the trying period of readjustment, is a spiritual service which is completely in accord with the spirit of our Rule and one which must indeed be near and dear to the Sacred Heart of the Good Shepherd. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul must be "the light that shall not fail!"

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

After Christ's resurrection, His disciples lay in hiding for fear of the Jews, and He compassionately kept near His little flock, to help them readjust to a new and startling situation. It was not easy, after enjoying three years of His friendship and constant attention, to live without His loving companionship and encouragement.

The two disciples walking along the road to Emmaus were discussing Him and their doubts and misgivings as to their future, when our Saviour appeared to them in the guise of a fellow-traveler, and buoyed up their Faith and restored their courage.

We cannot read the Gospel account of this beautiful story without feeling "our hearts burn within us" at the tender love of our Saviour. Perhaps it has occurred to us that in this incident our Lord would give us a practical lesson. This story should make us realize that the "forgotten man" is also on "the road the Emmaus" and, like the disciples, is sorely in need of companionship and encouragement.

How should the Vincentian carry out this mission to the "forgotten man"? Our Lord indicates the answer.

While every parolee is in need of advice and direction in becoming adjusted in the social setup, he has an even greater need of a spiritual rebirth. The Vincentian must help him to find that reassurance and quiet confidence which a vivid Faith and a great trust in Divine mercy and Providence alone can give.

To be able to reestablish the parolee in employment, to replace him in social equality in his community, contribute greatly to the success of the parole. But to direct him to spiritual security, to bolster his faith in God and man, are essentials in a complete readjustment.

A difficult task, to be sure, but one of compelling interest and rich in spiritual satisfaction—an objective worthy of a real Vincentian's devotion and aspirations.

A NEW VISION

The public has always pictured the Vincentian as the friend of the poor, visiting in wretched hovels, carrying with them food and medicines. This type of service is certainly most noble. But we must teach the public to conceive of the Society of Saint Vincent de

Paul as a friend of the spiritually poor and socially handicapped.

The Society must be seen as a lighthouse of hope and guidance to all distressed wayfarers, who, seeing the beacon of faith and hope, find the shore of spiritual safety, of social security.

May the anxious prisoner, gazing wistfully, hopefully, through his prison bars at the darkening vigil of his parole, see, on the distant horizon, a soft light of encouragement and promise—the beacon of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul—waiting to welcome him to a new friendship which is to mean a spiritual rebirth and social reinstatement and contentment.

Our Divine Teacher of Emmaus and our inspiring Patron, Saint Vincent de Paul, encourage you, Brethren, to accept this new mission in their name and with their support!

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